

(6)

Aut.

A

DIALOGUE

Between Two

Oxford Schollars.

OXFORD SCHOLARS
PUBLISHED

A

DIALOGUE

Between Two

Oxford Schollars.

A. **W**ELL! I see thou art resolv'd to leave us. I will not say, 'Go and be Hang'd; but go and turn Countrey-Parson.

B. That's almost as bad, as the World goes now: But thanks to my Stars, I know a better Trick then that.

A. It may be thou art fallen out with all Mankind, and intendest to turn Quack, or as they call it in the Country, Doctor.

B. No such matter, the French can kill Men fast enough; and for the Women, thou knowest my kindness——

A. But some of them have Lived too long; and there are others so miserable that even Compassion will incline thee to help them out of the World. I can assure thee 'tis a profitable Calling, for whether thou dost Kill or Cure, thy Fees will be put into thy Hand, and Ladies Bed-Chambers, thou knowest, are Comfortable places.

B. Yes, when they are found. But prethee speak no more of it, for I am resolv'd against it.

A. What then, art Thou resolv'd for the Law; methinks Thou should'st have too much University Learning, and too much Wit for that Profession.

B. And too much Honesty—— But I'll spare thee the pains of guessing, and tell thee in short what my Condition is, and what I design. My Portion is all spent save Fifty pound; and with that I am resolv'd for London, or some other Wealthy place, where Conventicles abound; and as a Man of a Tender Conscience, and infinitely dissatisfy'd with several things in the Church

A

of

of *England*, I will endeavour by some means or other to force my self into an Acquaintance with some of their leading Men, and more especially with some of the most Zealous and Powerful Women among them : And this point once gain'd, I doubt not, but before my stock is half spent, I shall receive a Call to be Pastor of, or Holderforth in some Congregation or other—— why do'st smile.

A. At my Friend's design. And I cannot but admire how it came into thy Head. Thy Ability to manage such a Design, I know very well, but how thou wilt dispense with the Knavery of it I am yet to learn.

B. That's a small matter. As the World goes, one must practise a little Knavery, or resolve to leave the World. Dost not know that Religious Cheats are Licens'd by a Law ? And shall I live and dye without taking advantage of it ? Believe me Friend, Nature has fitted me pretty well to be one of the Godly Mountebanks, and a little Art, together with few Months Conversation with that sort of People, will supply all Nature's Defects. Cannot I put on, when I please, a grave and serious Countenance ; and with Head depending on one Shoulder a little more than on the other, sigh for the Iniquities of the Times, and the Corruptions of the Church ? Cannot I wipe mine Eyes with the fair Pocket-Cloath, as if I wept for all your Abominations ? Cannot I groan in Spirit as if ready to burst with Grief and Compassion ? And cannot I likewise when Time serves, and Company is dispos'd to be kindly affected with it, smile and steer as takingly ? And what hurt is there in this ? Sure I may use my own fee as I please, *Et si populus vult decipi decipiatur*.

A. But where's your Conscience all this while ?

B. Why, 'Tis to be pretended for all this, and several things more—— And the pretence of Conscience is a good Legal Warrant against all Opposers. In short, Sir, I must live, and my Conscience tells me so, and you must help me to live, it is my own, and neither you nor any other Mortal has any thing to do with my Conscience.

A. A pure Rogue ! but what if my Conscience force me to discover thy Roguery, when thou art too far engag'd in it to make a fair Retreat ?

B. Behold the Blinders of Mankind, the folly of Humane Learning. How much better is one Dram of Grace then all the vain Philosophy of the World ? Let me tell thee my Friend, and I do it from the very bottom of my Bowels, That it is a very dangerous thing to suffer Conscience to Command thee : Thou had'st better Command it—— verily Beloved it is better to Command it : 'Tis good, 'tis good I say to bring it under the Yoke, Believe—— Alas, that you will be so hard of belief ! You break my Heart, indeed you do, by your Impersuadables——

A. Go, thou Canting Rascal to the Conventicle, and there be a Reproach to thy Mother and to all Old Acquaintance.

B.

B. And go thou to some pitiful Country Vicaridge; or if thy Stars favour thee, get the biggest Parsonage in thy Country, and I'll wager my Head against thee, I'll get more Money in one Year in a small Congregation of the Saints, than thou wilt do in three—

A. But a little gotten in an Honest way and with an upright Heart, will be sweeter than all thy Gains.

B. I intend not to dispute with thee about Honesty. It was much commended and but little practised, when the World was better than it is now. But I'll undertake to convince thee, that the Conventicling way is the only Thriving way, and the best way for me to take at this Time.

A. Do so then, I'll hear thee with a great deal of Patience, though I know there is nothing but Hypocrisy at the Bottom—

B. First then, if I have a desire to take Orders, in your way, I must to a Bishop; and before the Good Man with two or three of his Presbyters will lay Hands upon me, I must under go an Examination in several points of Divinity, as they please. This must needs go much against me, because I am well aware that I am but a small Divine.

A. Very Right.

B. Then supposing I am so fortunate as to pass Muster, I cannot be ordained before I have Subscribed and taken some Oaths. Neither of which will pass very well, if I am ever so little Popishly inclined, or Socinianiv'd, or have entertain'd any odd *Crotchets* in any point of Religion, (and 'tis but seldom that great Wits are without some) or if I know my self to be of a proud and pragmatistical Temper; not very apt to own any Superiors, and consequently not very able to withstand the Temptations I am like to meet withal to Faction, Sedition, and Rebellion.

A. Right still.

B. But supposing me to swallow all this, and to be Ordain'd: Before I go to Exercise my Office, the Bishops Secretary or Register will present me with some Parchments and Wax, and these I must take for my Credentials; for which I must present him with some Crowns, which for a poor Man that knows the worth of Money will go like so many Ounces of his best Blood. Is not this, think you, a very fine and hopeful Beginning? And can a Man hope to thrive that takes not better steps at first setting out? But now all this I clearly escape in my design'd way. I have no need of any outward Call, one from within will do my Business; and a pack of Phrases, without much Divinity, together with a Demure look, and some other Remarkable signs of Grace, either in my Face, or in the fashion of my Cloaths, will do as much as all the Parchment and Wax in the World. By Virtue of which I can hold forth the Gospel boldly, and pray out a Nonfensical Sermon without fear of

any Spiritual Court ; and Scratch and Tickle the Ears, the Itching Ears of my Godly Hearers, 'til they cry out, O precious Man ! How sweet and gracious are his Lips ! O happy people upon whom the Honey of the Gospel does drop so sweetly, so abundantly ! O that we were sensible of our Happiness ! O that we had but enlarg'd Mouths to receive it !—— And besides this, I am at Liberty (O precious Liberty, who would part with it for a Kingdom !) to find fault with any thing my Superiors do. I can compare your Bishops to *Baal's Priests*, and your Civil Governors to those that lick up the Spittle of the *Whore of Babylon* : I can bewail their Blindness, with all the signs of Grief and Compassion ; and with all the Spight I am capable of entertaining, envy against their Malice to the Truth—— And the more I spend my self this way, the more enlarg'd towards me will the Hearts of my good people be, and the more open their Purses.——

A. A subtle Rogue.

B. But then, in the second place, in your way, when I have done what I have said before, I cannot exercise the Office, which cost me so dear, to any purpose of Profit, without some Curacy, Vicaridge, or Parsonage ; and after either of these I may Hunt till my Pocket is as Empty as 'twas when it came from the Taylor. I may possibly meet in a short time with some rich Impropiator, who receives two or three hundred pounds a year in Tyths, who may out of his great Christian Charity, or generous Liberality vouchsafe to promise me Ten pound a year beside a *Sunday Pudding*, for which I must wear out mine Eyes and Lungs, and humour the Imperious Gentleman as much as his Groom or Butler. Or the like Fortune may befall me under a Goodly Pluralist, who will not favour me much more, though he may Condescend to call me Brother. But to put the best Case in short, we will suppose a Vicaridge or Personage to become Vacant, of an hundred pound value in common Estimation ; And the poor painful Priest standing fair in the opinion of the Neighbourhood is recommended to it ; It is ten to one but there is an *Abigail* in the Patron's House, that must be Married, or there is a Steward that has look'd after his Worthships business at very small wages for several years, and He must be gratified : or (as it often happens) the Gentlemans Hounds and Whores have weakn'd his Estate, and He must be dealt withal in way of Bargain and Sale ; or if he be in a better Condition, it may be he has a fancy to some of the Churches Revenüe, and thinks no Money so sweet as that which comes from the Clergy. And which of these soever it is, poor *Pil-Garlick* is but in sorry Circumstances. If there be nothing but Matrimony in the case, 'tis two to one he is undone. If there be not any thing of that, but all must be done by hard Silver or Gold, or something Equivalent, as a Lease of Tyths, or the like—— I am certainly Ruin'd, the Oath of Simony

will

will be a continual Scourge to me, and I may wear away my unhappy life before I shall recover the money I have paid or engag'd to pay —

A. This is not to be deny'd.

B. But suppose my good Fortune brings me a Presentation to a Benefice in the most Honourable way ; I must first with my Presentation to the Bishop ; and if my Patrons Title and my own Testimonials be accepted of, I must again subscribe and swear. And from him I am sent to an Arch-Deacon or Rural Dean for Induction with wax and Parchment the value of Five or Six pounds ; and this charge with that of Journeying will render the little Clergy-man as poor as *Job*. And when he comes to the long-wish'd for place, 'tis Five to One, he finds an old rotten House ready to fall upon his Head, and the little ground about it laid wast (for vacancies are generally beneficial to poor knaves) And a poor Disconsolate Widdow, with several children about her, ready to dye at the sight of Him, and all her Relations and friends come flocking about Him, to desire him to compassionate her condition and to allow her One years profit at least. — This is the joy that poor Booby must expect to meet with, when he knows very well that he has need of peoples charity Himself.

A. This may be too true.

B. But then, when I have got over all these Rubs, and begin to show my self in my Parish, and expect that something of Money should come in unto me to defray my former charges ; The Church-Wardens tell me, that they have a Sequestration upon my Living, and the Profits are at their Disposal till I have taken it off ; and withal, that a Considerable sum of Money has been disburs'd by them, for the service of the Cure during the vacancy, which must be repaid them. Which sad news puts me upon another Journey and Costs me a Pound or a Mark at least. And when this is done I find my Living is in the Kings Books, and the First Fruits must be Compounded for, and paid, which will make me much worse then nothing (as they say) and I must live upon the little Credit I have gotten by my Title to the Benefice. — But now, my friend, in my intended way, there is nothing of all this. If a Church will not call me, I can call a Church, and without a peny charge receive the profits thereof, being King, Bishop, Arch-Deacon and every thing my self. I shall be wholly on the gaining side, and not one person the better for my preferment.

A. Very good.

B. Let me then suppose my self to be sett'd in my Vicaridge or Parsonage ; I shall quickly feel my goings out, Besides Tenths to be yearly paid to the King, and the charges of Visitations by way of Procurations, Synodals and I know not what more ; The charge of attending upon my superiors when they are pleas'd to Command me ; The charge of entertaining officers, and I know not how many sorts of Men coming to me upon publick Business ; I shall find a

charge to lye heavy upon me from my own Parish: Hospitality must be kept, and none of my parishoners must go from me with dry Lips, or empty Bellies. I must contribute equally with all of them to the maintenance of the Militia, the Poor and I know not what besides; And upon some occasion or other, some of them will be spūging on me every day. — What this may cost me every Year let my friend compute if he pleases. I proceed to another charge, which poor Country Parsons do at this Time find more heavy then all. No Act of Parliament passes for Mōny for the King but the Clergy are included in it. And tho they have no Representatives, or votes by Representatives in Parliment, (except you will say a Knight or two in a County are intrusted to Vote for them) and have not the least power, either as Commissioners or Assessors in Levying of Taxes, which puts them in a worse condition then the meanest Freeholder that can expend Forty shillings a year, and lays them open to the Malice and Spight of every Atheistical or Factious knave in the Neighborhood; they must pay equally with their Neighbours, whose Estates have no such Burthens upon them, and are Estates of Inheritance: Equally. did I say? I may say double to what they pay; for I am sure upon good and certain grounds, that considering the charges they are at in the ways before mention'd, and that the far greatest part of what they can claim as due to them by Law, must come from a Multitude of people, some of whom are poor and cannot pay, and others Knavish and will not pay, except they be compell'd by Law, which as the Case stands with the Clergy is a Remedy worse then the Disease; that the Country man that has but Forty pounds a year is in a far better condition than the parson that has Fourscore, tho he has that Forty pound a year but for his Life, as the Parson has his Fourscore.

A. I can readily beleive all this; for 'tis but three days since I heard an Honest Country parson say, That his Charge was so great upon the Accounts mention'd, that he did not know how to maintain himself and his family in any tolerable sort, tho his Living was commonly reputed worth Sixscore pound a year. And he told me and others very seriously, That by the late Assessments which were made and deliver'd into the Commissioners upon Oath, He had paid and was to pay for Threescore pound a year, as much as some of his Neighbours did for Sixscore pound of good Land of Inheritance. And which is more, He told us that a proffest Papist in his Neighbourhood, who by the late Act of Three shillings in the pound was to pay double for his Estate, was not charg'd with so much as Himself for the same value in Tiths and a small Glebe. But nothing troubl'd him so much as that after all this He and his poor Brethren who would gladly part with their Benefices, if it could be done lawfully, for less mōny then Three hundred pound, should be made Gentlemen and forc'd to pay Twenty shillings a peice as such, tho some of them hardly know how to get bread to eat.

B. Very

B. Very well on my side, A wonderful encouragment indeed 'tis for a man to turn Country parson : May I rather be a Hog-beard. But there is this of comfort in it for those that look that way, that this may occasion a great fall in the price of Presentations. But let so much suffice for that, and let me proceed to something further, *viz.* That as I shall be quickly sensible of the charge I must be at in my new Parsonage, so when I come to demand my dues for the defraying of that charge, and the maintenance of my Family, I shall find it a hard matter to get them. If I be minded to farm out my Tiths, my Parishenours will bid me half the worth of them. If I will take them in kind, they will cheat me of little less than the half. And that which will vex me most of all, I must not dare to tell them of their injustice; for if I do I shall certainly have their ill will and as many mischeivous Tricks plaid me as they can possible. And should I lay aside all care for their Souls to watch their subtil practices, and do no more for them than any Lay Impropiator does where he is concern'd, they would be too hard for me in many things, so full of Cunning and Knavery are Clouted shoes—

A. Well, let them pass; for I can easily think of many things relating to them and their Cheats which need not take up our Time. I desire to have a short account of the Advantage thou dream'st of in thy intended way.

B. Dream, do you say? you shall hear and Confess that I think and speak nothing but Demonstration. Suppose me then in my Congregation as their Pastor, Teacher, Holderforth, call it what you please; you must know, that they will be a select Number of people, (not like your Churches a Herd made up of few Sheep and a Multitude of Goats) most of them of the sweet Female Sex (whose kindness towards the Spiritual Pastors or Teachers is never less than their Zeal for what they teach them) scatter'd up and down, here and there in several of your Parishes. And for the better Edification of these precious Souls, it will be in my power to chuse the place of my Residence or abode: And if I do not chuse a Convenient place 'tis my own Fault. Instead of an old rotten Parsonage or Vicaridge House, I promise my self Forty, Fifty or Threescore good Houses, where I shall be entertain'd with such fulness of Delight, yea and Empire too (not like your pitiful Curates or Chaplains that must sneak to the Groom and Butler) that even the Gentlemen that pretend to make a God of their Landlords will be apt to envy me. And if I resolve to enter into the Matrimonial state, I shall be strangely unfortunate, if instead of an *Abigail*; I meet not with some Opulent Widdow, or some tender hearted Virgin of no ordinary Fortune, who with yearning Bowels will offer me her best Assistance and endeavours to *build me a House*—

A. Excellent! 'Tis the Common fortune of a Conventicle.

B. Suppose me then a House-keeper; I dare promise my self at least an

hundred pound a year, which will be paid me Quarterly without the least trouble or charge. I say I dare promise my self so much, because I am well assur'd that several Holdersforth about mine own size, receive two or three hundred pound a year. And all this, if I please, may be spent on my own dear self; for besides this, That no Obligation to Hospitality will lye upon me, and I shall be troubled with few Visitors but such as will bring their Entertainment with them, if they send it not before them; or will pay me richly for what I gave them; I shall not be liable to pay one Penny out of my Income to Bishops or Chancellors, to Church or Poor, no, nor to the King and Queen. And what a Happiness, think you, will this be, to live under a Government, and to enjoy so much good under its Protection, and not part with one Farthing towards the support of it! And pardon us (my Friend) if we think our selves much the Happier, that your poor Parsons, Vicars and Curates, do with so much charge preserve and nourish the Tree, under the Branches of which we sit so safely, and enjoy our selves so pleasantly.—

A. Very pleasant indeed. But methinks, to a generous Soul this should be a very disagreeable way of Living.

B. That's thy Ignorance Friend. For what can be more agreeable to thee than that which comes freely, which is so far from being Extorted, as your Tith Pigs and Geese are, that it is even forced upon us. And if the good Wife does rob from the Husband, or the Husband does subtract a little from you to oblige and cherish us, it will not be the less but rather the more sweet unto us. You never yet heard that the Israelites were offended with their Jewels and other fine things, because they were the spoils of the Egyptians.—

A. Very true; but prithee do not prophane Scripture: And tell me whether thou must not be a slave to the Humours of thy precious People for all this; and how thou hopest to bring thy self to it.

B. Alas! That a Man should live so long in the University, and have his Eyes and his Ears open to get some knowledge of the World, and yet ask such a Question, and have need of Instruction. I'll resolve and instruct thee in few words, because I must hasten from the upon necessary business. Know then, that they are generally people that will be easily managed, and it can hardly be imagined that they should be otherwise, because they have been Teacher-ridden for many Years. Their Understandings have been so baff'd with Phrases and Distinctions, that they have but little use of them: And for their Affections, I shall be at Liberty to turn my self into any shape to Command them; and I do not doubt in the least but I shall have as Absolute an Empire over them, as ever the Pope of Rome had over the best natur'd of our Forefathers. But if any should prove more intractable or less ductible than others, I shall not be without some Tricks for 'em, which will not cost me

the half the pains as your Parsons are found to be at, to keep a poor Interest among their Parishioners.— But whereas you speak of my being a Slave, let me tell you in short, that I know no greater Slaves than the Church of England Clergy are; and I have never thought of them of late, but the Fate of *Issachar* has come into my mind, *a strong and patient Creature Crouching down between two Burdens*. On one side there are Laws or Acts of Parliament, on the other Canons, and lest these should not pinch you enough, there comes ever and anon Declarations, Injunctions, Orders, and I know not what besides, which must be submitted to, or the poor Creature must suffer for it. There was a Time indeed when you were accounted one of the three Estates of the Realm, and the first and greatest of the Three; but now you are swallow'd up by the other two, and you stand but for Cyphers in the Government. Your Privileges are daily lessened; and your Burdens are daily increased; for besides the Burdens which your Predecessors did bear, and you as Clergymen do bear still, many of the Burdens of the Laity are laid upon you, whilst you enjoy the Privileges of neither. You are made meer Tools for the Great ones to work their Designs by; and when they have Compassed their ends, they expose you to Contempt and Scorn, and encourage the vilest of the people to tread you under foot. Your Power and Authority, as the Ministers of Christ is next to nothing. You may talk in your Pulpits, as Mountebanks upon the Stage, but few think themselves obliged to mind what you say. And as for your Censors which formerly were dreaded as Thunder-bolts, they are generally contemn'd, and there is one bare word which will defend the vilest and most scandalous men against them all. Some parts of your office (in some cases at least) you cannot execute according to your Rule, without galling your Consciences; and yet if you fail to do it, there is a Cruel Whip ready for your Backs. And though your Principles are infinitely Servicable to Government, Order. and Peace, yet you are treated rather like Enemies than Friends thereunto; as men of pernicious Principles and of no Conscience. Whilst others whose principles are big with Nonsense and Irreligion, and who draw Consequences from them destructive to all Government, and productive of Anarchy and Confusion, are favour'd and respected as Men of Conscience, Sobriety, and Godliness, because they scruple the wearing of a Surplice, Sir. If you know not these things, you know nothing. Judge then whether you may not be accounted Slaves. I wou'd add something of the Freedom of the Conventicle Holders-forth— Free as the Light they are, and safe as the Sun in the Firmament: They are ty'd to no Rules but their own, and those they may change as they please themselves.— But I must leave thee at present, for the Dispatch of Necessary business.

A. One Word before thou goest, *viz.* That as Happy as the Converters are at present, the Case may quickly be altered with them and us.

B. Yes when the World becomes Wife. But that is not to be expected in this its declining State.

A. But there is, thou know'st, an Union designed between all dissenting Parties: And good Men hope it will quickly be effected.

B. But they who have their Eyes in their Heads, know very well, that will not be done by the ways of Condescension and Comprehension, unless there be a Miraculous change wrought upon the Dissenting Parties. Must it once their Interest to Unite with you, and do something to save their Religion, and then I shall entertain some Hope: But till this be done I'll prepare myself for what I said at first was my Design. And do thou turn Country Fellow or be—

THE END.

L O N D O N,

Printed for H. H. and T. J. near Temple-Bar